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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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THE GLORY THAT WAS GREECE

Recently Allied armies have liberated Greece and that small war-swept country is in the public news and public consciousness. Two current exhibits in the Royal Ontario Museum highlight that country. One deals with ancient and the other with modern Greece. Behind each lies the same geography and equable climate, the same mountainous, sea-invaded land. Despite obvious differences a certain unity of spirit may be observed in the man-made objects from the two periods. Greeks, ancient and modern, display a marked sense of form and a love of delicate detail.

The exhibit of ancient objects drawn from the Museum's collection presents a feminine theme—the little naked idol of 2500 B.C. stands in vivid contrast to her fourth century sisters, a pair from Tanagra (wrapped closely in their draperies) and a wistful head from an Athenian gravestone. The lady's brooches and diadem, her earrings and her perfume flask vary likewise down the ages, yet somehow they all show the same simplicity of design, and sensitive feeling for the material, be it bronze or gold, ivory-tinted marble or warm, buff clay. These ivory and metallic tones also run through the exhibit of modern objects—the tone of old linen against which gleam silver and gold metal-thread enlivening the embroidered flowers, the tone of dull gold and copper in the church pictures, the ikons. The old crafts have their modern counterparts in silver and copper work, gilded jewellery, pottery copying ancient designs, and wood-carving. Beside them are shown some of the local materials which developed them, a surprising range, including marble, zinc, emery and copper.

CHRISTMAS SPREAD

Visit the Royal Ontario Museum during the Christmas holidays. See the rich variety of things upon which to feast the eye—something for every taste.

ANCIENT FOOTPRINTS

Footprints spur the imagination. Do you remember reading with excitement about that footprint in the sand found by Robinson Crusoe? A footprint is a clue. It may help the detective to solve a murder mystery. To the student of fossils it has different significance.

In the Royal Ontario Museum there are tracks and trails preserved in rock, of animals that lived millions of years ago. On exhibit at present are footprints made by two animals, thought to be amphibians, that eked out an existence in a coal swamp near Parrsboro', Nova Scotia, 200,000,000 years ago. At that remote time in history the amphibians (represented now by frogs, toads and salamanders) were among the highest known types of animal life. These creatures lived near the swampy border of a shallow sea. Their footprints were left in ripple-marked sands exposed by the ebbing tide. The sun beat down upon the beach and baked the imprints, thus fixing them. Again and again the returning tides spread layers of sand over the imprints preserving them for posterity.

MUSEUM HOURS

Open Week Days except Monday, 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Sundays 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. Tea Room open 3.00 to 5.00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS 1944

Another wartime Christmas is approaching. We pray it is bringing peace much closer. We of the Royal Ontario Museum are concerned with peace both as individual humans and as an institution. Some of our staff are absent on war duties, while others have friends or relatives in the armed services. Worry and uncertainty gnaw at our hearts, too. Wars and museums do not agree in attribute. Wars destroy; museum preserve. We are attempting to show by means of exhibits, printed word and lecture, the works of man and nature, modern and ancient; to hold out hope for the present; and to point toward a richer, more varied life for the future.

FAMILIAR FISH ARE "LIVING FOSSILS"

In a museum such as our own Royal Ontario Museum one can observe the fossilized skeletons of animals that have long since disappeared from the earth—the dinosaurs for example. Most animals of the distant past seem strange, quite unlike those of today. Differences are figuratively parallel to those observed when an automobile of 1910 is compared with the 1940 model. Animal models have changed too. But a few creatures living today are so like their distant ancestors that they are sometimes called "living fossils." The waters of Ontario contain three familiar fish which deserve this name. They are the sturgeon, the garpike and the bowfin. These fish display features so like those of ancient fish that they truly rank as living fossils.

NOT A SHOPPING SUGGESTION

Ancient Egyptian jewellery in the Royal Ontario Museum will cultivate your taste but don't hope for custom-made replicas these days. The collection includes beads of ostrich egg-shell, blue glaze, and a wide variety of semi-precious stones cut and combined to form a beautiful colour scheme. Gold pendants, usually in the form of amulets, enrich the beads. More wonderful still is a fragment from a pectoral ornament—a bird's wing of gold inlaid with lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian. The stones were set into tiny feather-shaped spaces formed by strips of gold soldered onto a gold plate. Ornaments such as these were worn by ladies 4000 years ago.

IRISH DEER EXTINCT

Closely related to the reindeer, which we are apt to associate with Christmas, is the great Irish deer or elk, as it is sometimes called. A splendid skeleton of this extinct animal, as well as two heads, are exhibited in the Royal Ontario Museum.

This deer flourished in Ireland during the Great Ice Age which occurred within the last million years. Skeletons are found not uncommonly in the peat bogs of that country. The head of the Irish deer is furnished with massive, palmate antlers that have an enormous spread of twelve feet. Such spreading antlers are not found on deer of the present day, not even on the moose or wapiti, our largest representatives of this animal group.